

What is pityriasis rosea?

Pityriasis rosea is a common skin condition with many small, slightly scaly, oval patches on the chest and back. It most frequently affects people between 10-35 years of age and is self-resolving (going away without treatment) usually after 6-12 weeks.

What are the symptoms of pityriasis rosea?

People usually feel well, though they may be slightly unwell just before the rash starts with a mild headache and fever. The rash is occasionally itchy.

What does pityriasis rosea look and feel like?

The first sign is the **herald patch**; a single scaly round to oval patch 2-10 cm in diameter.

Up to 2 weeks after the **herald patch** appears, a **more widespread rash develops** comprised of small oval patches with fine scale usually ranging in size up to 1.5 cm. On the **chest and back** the rash often runs in the same direction as the ribs, sometimes resembling the branches of a Christmas tree. The neck, upper arms, and upper thighs can also be affected. The face, hands, and feet are not usually affected.

In **light skin** the patches are usually pink-red. In **skin of colour** the patches can sometimes be grey, deep brown or black.

After the rash has gone, you may have some darker or lighter areas of skin. These should return to normal within a few months and will not leave permanent scarring.

What causes pityriasis rosea?

The cause is unknown. It is not contagious (i.e. you cannot pass it on to anyone).

Things you can do to help yourself

Pityriasis rosea **usually gets better without treatment** within 12 weeks.

If the skin is **itchy or uncomfortable** an emollient moisturising cream applied as often as needed can help. Sometimes a mild topical steroid cream is needed which can be purchased at your pharmacy without a prescription.

Make an appointment at your GP surgery

An appointment with a health professional is usually **only required if** – the diagnosis is not clear, the itch is not responding to the treatments described above, or the rash is not starting to improve after three months.

Helping with other skin conditions

If you, a family member, or friend have an undiagnosed skin condition; or you want to learn more about how to treat skin conditions, please visit www.pcds.org.uk – if you click the purple tile near the top of the homepage that reads **Take a Tour** you can learn how best to use this website.